The BATTLE OF IDEAS

Six Speeches on the Centenary of the Communist Manifesto

20th NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

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Speeches made in the discussion on the *Communist Manifesto* Centenary at the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party in February, 1948.

The discussion was opened by Emile Burns whose speech is published separately (*The Triumph of Communism*, 3d.). Other pamphlets on the Congress are listed on page 20.

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Professor George Thomson

Lenin, in "What is to be Done," wrote as follows:—

> "The theory of Socialism grew out of the philosophical, historical and economic theories that had been elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. According to their social status, the founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia."

These two young men, both of them under thirty, who wrote the *Manifesto* were disciples of Hegel, the great bourgeois philosopher. They had also made a profound study of the English political economists and the French Utopian Socialists. All this knowledge they had acquired as members of the bourgeoisie, and of course they brought it with them when they threw themselves into the struggle of the working class. But, having thrown themselves into those struggles, they transformed it. They transformed the dialectical idealism of Hegel into dialectical materialism. They transformed the Utopian Socialism of Saint-Simon and Fourier into Scientific Socialism. In the *Manifesto* they united all that was best in bourgeois theory with proletarian practice, and out of this union they created a new theory, Marxism, which was also a guide to action. But before they could do this, before they could form their revolutionary theory and their revolutionary party, they had first of all to effect a revolution in themselves.

During the hundred years that have passed since the publication of the *Manifesto,* the Socialist movement and, above all, the Communist Party, has attracted increasing numbers of bourgeois intellectuals, drawn to it for the same reasons as Marx and Engels had been, and in the same way. They have been drawn to it because they have learnt that the cultural achievements of capitalism cannot be preserved by capitalism, but only by Socialism, and that Socialism can only be won under the leadership of the working class. And so the experience of the young Marx and Engels contains a lesson for every intellectual and cultural worker who joins our Party. In joining

the Party, we are confronted by difficult problems, which we can only solve by effecting a revolution in ourselves, by transforming our outlook on life. It will help us to solve these problems if we remember that fundamentally they are not new or peculiar to us—they are the same problems that Marx and Engels had to solve for themselves, with no one to guide them, when they were strenuously preparing for that great leap forward in the history of human thought which is embodied in the *Communist Manifesto.*

Our Party looks to its intellectuals for leadership in the battle of ideas. As dialectical materialists, we know that the ideological struggle is more than a passive reflection of the class struggle. We know that, when an idea takes hold of the masses, it becomes itself a force, capable of shaping the course of history. Our enemies know it too. That is why they are always dressing up the old bourgeois lies in new disguises in order to deceive and disarm the people. It is our duty to refute and expose these lies. We must show that, when they accuse us of aiming at violent revolution or mass misery, it is only because they are trying to hide the truth that all the evils of which they accuse us are present here and now as inevitable features of their own capitalist system. In exposing these lies, we must not remain on the defensive. We must carry the war into the enemy's camp, as Marx and Engels did when they wrote the *Manifesto.* The anti-Soviet speeches of Attlee and Bevin, the Morgan Phillips circular, and the hysterical inquisitions of the Committee of Un-American Activities—these things are not new, as we can see by reading that chapter of the *Manifesto* in which Marx and Engels hurl back in the teeth of the bourgeoisie their monstrous charge that we, and not they, are destroyers of individual liberty. The capitalist system, even in its prime, has never allowed scope for intellectual liberty outside the narrow circle of the capitalist class, because the nature of capitalism is such that liberty for the capitalist means for the workers the opposite of liberty. And if that was true when the *Manifesto* was written, it is even more true today. With the growth of monopoly capitalism, which restricts production and crushes all forms of creative activity, the ruling class renounces even its own limited bourgeois liberties and turns to fascism, which destroys not only liberty, but life itself. The only safeguard of individual liberty in the world today is Socialism; under Socialism, for the first time in history, it ceases to be a class privilege and becomes common property, enjoyed by the whole people, and consequently it becomes a finer thing in itself than it has ever been before. Under Socialism, the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all.

In order to wage this battle of ideas, we must equip ourselves, as Marx and Engels did, with a full mastery of our scientific theory. We must study Marxism. But Marxism cannot be mastered in the study. It can only be mastered by active participation in the struggle of the working class. And further, in addition to refuting the false charges brought against us, we must be constantly, patiently, constructively explaining Marxism. To explain Marxism is to develop it. As professional workers, we must learn how to apply Marxism in our special field. By applying it we shall enrich it, and so improve the quality of our specialist work. As Stalin said:—

> "A Marxist cannot be just a specialist in his favourite science; he must also be a political worker, keenly interested in the destinies of his country, acquainted with the laws of social development, and capable of applying them."

This means that without political activity we shall fail as Marxists in our specialist work. We must be active members of our Party branches. Only in that way can we acquire that direct experience of the class struggle which we need if we are to develop a grasp of dialectics. At the same time, the branch gives us a channel through which we can contribute our specialist skill and knowledge into the main stream of Party life. It sometimes happens that, when a professional comrade goes to his branch, he leaves his professional work behind him. This is a mistake. We must work in our branches as specialists—as teachers, doctors, journalists, writers, musicians, painters, poets. Only then shall we be making the distinctive contribution that we have to make, and by making it we shall enrich the life of the branch and of the whole Party.

In addition to our branch work, we must be organised on a professional basis in the Party. Already we have a number of professional groups—historians, architects, economists, scientists, teachers, doctors, writers, musicians, actors and artists. But these groups are very far from including all the professional talent in the Party. They are still in the main almost entirely confined to London. In order to expand and develop them, we must give them better leadership by strengthening our National Cultural Committee.

Lastly, a few words on the problems that confront our creative artists, which in some ways are particularly difficult. But the difficulty of finding a solution is compensated for by the richness of the reward. The message that our artists have to convey to the people is all the more moving because its appeal is indirect. And the general lines on which a solution is to be

found have been indicated by Christopher Caudwell, poet, scientist, soldier, one of the greatest Englishmen of our time; himself a bourgeois intellectual who transformed himself into a revolutionary leader of the working class. Addressing the artists in the name of the proletariat, he wrote:—

> "Our demand—that your art should be proletarian—is not a demand that you apply dogmatic categories and Marxist phrases to art. To do so would be bourgeois. We ask you that you should *really* live in the new world and not leave your soul behind in the past. It is your artist's soul for which we value you; and how can your soul be in the new world if your art is bourgeois?
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> "Ours is not a demand that you should accept in the realm of art what you call proletarian dictatorship. On the contrary, we shall say that you are still bourgeois so long as you impose a proletarian dictatorship on yourself and import formulations from other fields of proletarian ideology to apply them mechanically to art. It is a demand that you, an artist, become a proletarian leader in the field of art. . . . You must take the difficult creative road of refashioning the categories and technique of art so that it expresses the new world coming into being and is part of its realisation. Then we shall say your art is proletarian and living; then we shall say your soul has left the past—it has drawn the past into the present, and so forced the realisation of the future."

And then Caudwell adds:—

> "The proletariat addresses what is in substance the same message to the scientist, the engineer, the factory manager, the historian, and the economist."

As I said at the beginning, it was this same message that inspired Marx and Engels to write the *Communist Manifesto,* in which they drew the past into the present and so forced the realisation of the future.

Dr. John Lewis

When Harry Pollitt said of the *Manifesto* that we should get "renewed inspiration and greater political understanding from a new study of this basic classic of Marxism," I could not help thinking of the war of ideas, for the fighting of that war is my trade. I recalled what Marx said in the *Critique* about the ideological forms in which "men become conscious of the class struggle and fight it out."

Parallel with the obvious political battle, a war of ideas is raging today. Consider the endless attempts to discredit

Marxism. Have you noticed how obsessed our opponents are with Marx? They come back to him again and again, and they can never manage to understand what it is that he says. What they give us are only grotesque distortions of the actual teachings of Marx. They remind me of what an old lady of my acquaintance always says when she hears modern music on the wireless—"They're making it up as they go along."

Let me give you just one example from the Dr. Popper's Open Society :

> "The real task of scientific Socialism is the annunciation of the impending Socialist millenium."

The idea, you see, is that Marxism is a kind of astrology which predicts the inevitable and automatic coming of Socialism and then sits down and awaits for it to happen. That, I suppose, is what we have been up to these last three days! Is that the picture of what Communists are doing that we get from the examples of working-class activity given from the rostrum?

Another ideological line is the depreciation of human nature. These people, who are supposed to value the individual so much more than we Marxists, insist that man is altogether too evil, too corrupt, to be able, apart from a miracle of divine grace (which never happens!), to build a better world. This cynical and unworthy view of man is the theme of sermons on Sundays, of an endless series of broadcasts, of many films (*Brighton Rock*, for example) and scores of novels. Along with it goes the preaching of a distant and utterly unattainable ideal, an abstract perfectionism, which, they inform us, we must at any rate go on believing in even if we never practise it.

Here we have the two halves of the same false philosophy. Helpless, sinful man—the unrealisable ideal.

It was neatly summed up by the American philosopher, Santayana—"The real is rotten, only the imaginary is good."

This leads straight to the view proclaimed by Bertrand Russell and many others that it is "cosmic impiety," intolerable presumption, to believe that we can control and plan our human destinies. Here he joins with the theologians he so often pours scorn upon to preach the vanity of human efforts.

There are many other such false philosophies. What is their significance? Clearly they will tend to have a paralysing effect and to confuse our minds, to hold us back from taking hold of the world and making it anew. These are the ideas of the ruling class, which, as Marx and Engels said in the *Communist Manifesto*, become the ruling ideas of the age.

It is possible to be attracted towards Socialism by common sense and at the same time to be held back because somehow

or other we have become infected by this disease of modern thought. You can't really have *blank* minds on these issues. As Engels said, you don't really free yourself from philosophy by ignoring it, and those who do so are often "slaves to precisely the worst vulgarised relics of the worst philosophers."

We can't fight the capitalist class if we are imbued with the ideas of capitalism in decay. What we need is a philosophy of our own, not one borrowed from the class enemy. In Marxism we have a system of ideas which, instead of confusing and paralysing, energises and inspires—ideas which, in the words of Stalin, are "capable of setting into motion broad masses of the people and organising them into a great army."

This is of enormous importance for our whole membership, but especially for our 7,000 new members. It is only a beginning for them to join the Party. They have come in bringing with them a heritage of ideas from the capitalist world. These ideas must be changed if they are to become good Communists. They must be replaced by a scientific, positive view of man and his world. Only such a method of thinking will prove antiseptic against the poisons of our decaying age.

And here I want to pay a tribute to the admirable work of the Education Department of the Party and of its leader, Comrade Douglas Garman. The educational work of the Party has made great advances during the last few years, and the schools which are being held both in London and throughout the country are doing a great deal to raise the political level and the philosophical understanding of our people.

Don't let us think that people will not be interested in this side of our work. They are extraordinarily interested. The result has certainly been to wake people up to these issues. This gives us our chance. They are well aware of the defeatism of what they have heard. What we have to say comes as a tonic, as a breath of invigorating fresh air, as dependable fact, instead of the nightmare fancies of the witchdoctors.

That is why our opponents are compelled to testify to the tremendous appeal of Marxist philosophy today. An eminent Catholic philosopher says: "Dialectical materialism is being presented with more success than any theistic philosophy." The Archbishop of York, writing in the January issue of his *Diocesan Gazette,* laments the "couldn't care less" attitude of disillusionment he finds everywhere and goes on to say:—

> "Recently, on the Continent, I was greatly impressed with the confidence of members of the Communist Party; they have faith in a classless society free from social injustice, poverty and ignorance, and are pressing forward their plans for it."

How does that become possible? It is clear that we have here precisely that kind of theory which Marx says becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses.

We are trying in this country, through the *Modern Quarterly*, to meet the lies, misunderstandings and misrepresentations and to deal with the decaying ideology of a world in dissolution. I would that those who so frequently misrepresent what Marx really stands for could all of them be induced to read the forthcoming Centenary issue of the *Modern Quarterly* with its brilliant articles by Douglas Garman, R. Palme Dutt, Professor Bernal and others, and I trust that delegates to the Congress will do their best to give it the widest possible circulation among those whose minds are confused and muddled by what they have heard about Marxism.

Let us boldly face, analyse and tear to pieces the lies and sophistries of the dead-end philosophers of our time. And let us re-state our Marxism as a living philosophy and scientific method of thinking, which will give men a clear understanding and unshakeable confidence in their power to change the world. And in the teaching of Marxism let us always remember what Lenin insisted on :

> "We do not want anything to be accepted with the eyes shut—to be an article of faith. Everyone should keep his head tight on his own shoulders and think out and verify everything for himself."

Idris Cox

One hundred years ago, Marx and Engels, in writing the historic *Manifesto*, handed down to the working-class movement a weapon which is changing the course of world history. With the maturing of great events of 1948, when the spectre of Communism was haunting Europe, they felt it was high time to produce a Manifesto of the Communist Party so that the revolutionary movement could be guided with a scientific theory of Socialism.

I believe it is also high time that we should grasp the opportunity of this centenary to make a closer study of this first basic statement of Marxist principles and to apply these principles to present-day conditions in our fight to achieve Socialism.

We shall need to mobilise the whole of the Party membership to wage a consistent fight: first, to ensure that every member has a thorough grasp of the principles outlined in the *Manifesto*, and secondly, to apply them to present-day conditions so as to give a revolutionary perspective to all active workers in the Labour movement.

We know that the parasitic nature of capitalist development in Britain strengthened the belief that the advance and victory of the working class could be achieved without revolutionary struggle. On the Continent of Europe the Social Democratic leaders gave lip service to Marxism. In Britain the official Labour movement did not even give lip service to the founder of scientific Socialism.

It is true that the wave of industrial unrest which arose out of the growing crisis of capitalism in the days before the First World War created a new interest in Marxism and led to the growth of the Labour College movement—ostensibly to teach Marxism, but in the main the Marxist analysis of capitalist development was divorced from the revolutionary content of Marx's teachings. This was so much so that Postgate, that prize humbug of so-called Labour historians, could write a history of the 200 years before 1946 entitled "The Common People," and not even mention the fact that Marx and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848.

It is those advanced elements in the working-class movement who carried on the fight during the First World War, particularly in South Wales and the Clydeside, and who later joined hands with the Marxist elements in the S.L.P., B.S.F., etc., to form our Party after the war which laid the foundation for waging the fight in Britain for the revolutionary principles of Marxism.

If we look back over the past 27 years, while we can be proud of our work in bringing the revolutionary teachings of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, to wider circles in the Labour movement, and of our own initiative in applying these teachings to the conditions existing in Britain, I think we have to recognise that what we have done in the past is nothing to what we now need to do to make the principles of the *Communist Manifesto* a living reality in the period that lies ahead.

None of us can be satisfied with the extent to which the *Manifesto* is read and studied, even in the ranks of our own Party—much less the extent to which it has been read and studied among the millions in the Labour movement. This new centenary edition of the *Manifesto* gives us the opportunity to make the *Manifesto* our best seller, and to remember the classic phrase that "the idea of Communism can become a material force." This centenary is also historic, though in a smaller way, because it marks the first publication of the *Manifesto* in the Welsh language. Whilst it is true that Wales does not lag behind the rest of the country in the number of workers who have read the *Manifesto* in English, this is the first time it is available in Welsh. It is not only important for Wales, for in the past 25 years no less than 600,000 Welshmen have migrated from Wales

to England, and there are more Welsh-speaking Welshmen in London, Liverpool and Birmingham than there are in the City of Cardiff.

This Welsh edition is not only important itself: it enables us to get in touch with nearly 200,000 people in Wales for whom Welsh is the first language and English the secondary language, and another half-million people for whom English is the first language and Welsh the second. It is important because it gives us an entry into the Welsh-speaking rural areas, among the small farmers, and to combat the muddle-headed, but dangerous, ideas of the Welsh Nationalists.

There is a national problem in Wales, as in Scotland, and the frustration which arises from Wales being a depressed area has given the Welsh Nationalists an opportunity to put forward a policy which can only divide the people of Wales from the workers of England. The Labour leaders completely ignore the existence of a national problem in Wales. Only the Communist Party combines the fight for the vital interests of the working class with the solution of the national problem. The growth of Communist influence amongst Welsh-speaking people is expressed in the fact that the Welsh language weekly papers, which for decades have been reserved for the propagation of Welsh nonconformist doctrines, are now obliged to give considerable space to arguments for and against Communism.

The principles in the *Manifesto,* properly understood and operated, can unite the struggle of the workers in Wales, England and Scotland into one common fight against the British ruling class to end capitalist exploitation and so reach the stage which Engels describes as "humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom."

John Nicolson

A quotation from the *Manifesto*: "In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they (the Communists) point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat independently of all nationality."

There is not yet a sufficient understanding of the role the national question will play in British politics in the great period of struggle into which we are emerging.

One of the most notable features in Scottish political development in the period since the beginning of the Second World War has been the tremendous growth of national consciousness. In my opinion, this does not so much represent any success for the propaganda of the Scottish Nationalist Party, nor does it repre-

sent any growth of Chauvinism, but rather a growing awareness (if not yet complete consciousness) of the acuteness of the capitalist contradictions in the Scottish set-up, and the grim outlook the future holds for all Scotland if the capitalists win the next historical round as they won the one after the First World War.

As Comrade Burns pointed out, the working class must constitute itself the nation, and in no country has this conception to be studied more intensely than in Scotland today.

In our country we have Social Democracy in fine flower, carrying through its historical role with classic distinction. We have not only saddled the British movement with Ramsay MacDonalds and Arthur Hendersons but produced a native crop which almost completely undermines the faith of the working class in its ability to build Socialism.

But reaction in Scotland has another weapon—the national question. The new shifts in class alignments which will undoubtedly occur as the full consequences of the crisis strike us will present us with historic responsibilities and with problems we have not encountered before, and we Communists in Scotland will ignore the national question at our peril.

Already Tory reaction is exploiting this situation. These people, who never were anything but a bunch of quislings, ready to sell their country for the large helpings they got at the table of expanding British imperialism, have now come out as the champions of Scotland.

Colonel Gomme Duncan, M.P. for Perthshire constituency, through the Scottish B.B.C. and in the House of Commons, has already set the ball of Anglophobia rolling. And this is only an earnest of what is to come.

Under no circumstances should we ever permit the use of our national traditions to be exploited in this fashion. The greatest pages in the record of our country were written in the struggle against national and class oppression. We would do well to recall on this 100th anniversary of the *Manifesto* that the first victory of the common people under Marxist leadership was not the Dockers' Tanner in 1888 in London, but the victory of the Highland Land League in 1883, whereby the crofters of Scotland won security of tenure and an end of rackrenting, under the leadership of Dr. G. B. Clarke, associate of Marx and Engels, and member of the First International.

We should recall also that in 1905 it was the Marxists in Scotland in the S.D.F. in Fife who did not a little to ship small arms to the Russian revolutionaries in that dress rehearsal for 1917.

We have to build the Party to be the mass party of the common people of Scotland. Only such a Party, guided by Marxism, can be the true inheritors of the radical and fighting traditions of our people.

This demands that we widen and deepen the national character of our work, while at the same time strengthening its Marxist content. In so doing, we shall not only kill the plans of the reactionary elements for dividing our people at a most critical period in our history, but we will mobilise as allies on our side the Scottish middle class, who meantime stand aside and whose adhesion to the Right would gravely hinder our struggle.

Already the Scottish Communist Party has produced material of which we are proud. But we are only at the beginning of this work, and we have yet to prove ourselves in the Scottish cultural field. If we in Scotland pledge ourselves to carry forward this work in the spirit and principles of the *Manifesto,* we can say that soon we will successfully play that role with which history has charged us.

Hyman Lee

The Centenary of the *Communist Manifesto* compels us to look back on one hundred years of working-class and Socialist struggle in this country. When we look back we must think about those great struggles which the working class has taken part in over the past century: the struggles of the Durham miners against Lord Londonderry, the struggle of the Northumberland miners for shorter working days, the struggle of the Chartists in Lancashire, Yorkshire and other parts of the country, the struggle of Tom Mann and others for the New Unions, and also the struggle, over a long period of this 100 years, of men like William Gallacher.

These struggles, which have helped to bring about the present progressive revolutionary movement in this country, which is represented by the Communist Party, must inspire us in the struggles in which we are about to take part.

We understand that Marxism grew out of these struggles. We recall that Engels spent over twenty years in Manchester; and when he wrote his *Conditions of the Working Class in* 1844, he stated, in the English preface to the first German edition, that he enjoyed nothing better than to leave his bourgeois friends and to visit the homes of working-class families in Manchester.

Marxism is the theory which helps the working class to struggle for power; because the Labour Party does not want working

class power, they don't need such a theory. Today they are advancing the idea that they are a "Third Force." They are a "Third Force"—a third-class force, which won't enable us, the working class, to do the first class job which we have to do, of overthrowing capitalism, and building Socialism.

The attitude of the Labour leaders and the Labour Government in the fields of philosophy, art, science, is just the same as it is in the field of Trade Unionism and working class struggle. Recently, the Labour Government, in distributing Orders and prizes, presented the Order of Merit to T. S. Eliot, the poet.

This poet has been described as a man who has no contact with the people, who is often obscurantist; and very few people understand many of the things he wrote. Yet this is the poet who was chosen for honours by the Labour Government. This is but another example of the absence of real Socialist ideas in the present Labour Government.

A great deal has been written in recent months about the critical activity of the Soviet Communists, with regard to literature and music. What did they do? The leaders of the Soviet Communist Party thought it their duty to comment about literature and music, as they think it their duty to speak about foreign policy. What is wrong with that? Why hasn't the Central Committee of the Communist Party the same right to condemn a work of art, as, say, a critic such as the late James Agate? Why should it be considered the privilege of one individual critic to refer to something as rubbish, and not the privilege of a collective body of intelligent politicians? We have the right, as Communists, and as a Communist Party, to give our views on literature, music, art, etc., and to see whether these serve the interests of the people.

Some time ago, a well-known film critic, C. A. Lejeune, wrote about a new film she had seen (the film was "They made me a Fugitive"), and she said that it was a film without ideals, and that too much time and money was being spent in depicting the life of the underworld, the life of spivs, crooks; and that it was high time a new direction was given to films. Is this not the very essence of our Communist criticism on the output of the literature, film, and art world?

When we are speaking about the battle of ideas, we should realise that all of us can take a part in it. The intellectuals, professors, and scientists are doing a great job; so are the worker correspondents who are writing to the local newspapers combatting the distortions of Marxism and Communism which are appearing throughout the country.

Just at this moment we are experiencing a great anti-Communist campaign in the press. We could do a very fine job by

developing more correspondence on Marxist lines, in the local press.

The great follower of Marx and Engels, Lenin, made his contribution to Marxism, particularly in the building and organisation of the Communist Party. Therefore, if we want to carry out the great principles of the *Manifesto,* we should devote ourselves to the building up, and strengthening the influence, of the Communist Party.

Ron Leven

Comrade Burns, in his speech introducing the resolution on the *Communist Manifesto,* referred to the fact that the ideas of the ruling class dominate the thinking of very large sections of our people. This same fact was also emphasised by Comrade Pollitt in his reply to discussion when he dealt with the conditions in which the British Labour movement developed.

This is not to be wondered at when we consider the vast machinery that capitalism has devised for the dissemination of its ideas. Millions of people are influenced through books, press, radio, cinema; while the educational system itself inevitably instils ideas which condition the minds of young people to accept capitalism and its values as the highest achievement of civilisation.

Therefore our Party is today waging a battle on all sectors of the ideological front. There is, however, one vitally important section of the people which we shall neglect at our peril: that is, the youth, especially the working-class youth. These lads and girls, day after day, are subjected to a high-powered barrage of reactionary propaganda. Not only must we counter, but take the offensive, against this poison.

In Britain at the present time there are 3,035,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and a further one and a half million between the ages of 24 and 26, a total of over four and a half million, of whom three milllion will be eligible to vote at the next General Election. I have been unable to discover the percentage of these who are organised in the trade union movement, but, according to a recent survey carried out by Political and Economic Planning, not more than forty thousand youngsters between the ages of 14 and 21 are engaged in political activity.

This, however, is not the whole picture, for there are over two and a half million young people organised in one way or another in the so-called traditional youth organisations which, while claiming to be non-political, nevertheless exert a real

political influence—the influence of the ideology of the class enemy, often all the more effective because the young people are themselves unconscious of it.

Officially, the whole emphasis is upon the passive role of youth under the tutelage of " disinterested " adults. But what this means in practice may be seen from the following passage from the Report of the Youth Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Education: " We want to see them all grounded in the principal loyalties of a sound civilisation; their loyalty to God, to King and country . . . and their unit of livelihood." In short, the enterprise in which they are employed.

At the present time there are over a million lads in the armed forces, whom we are demanding should be brought home. But meanwhile what are they talking about? What are they thinking? What kind of ideas are being fed to them? Some, it is true, in Palestine and Greece, may be learning from bitter experience the real nature of the " new " imperialism: just as we who are older learned in India and Burma, France and Italy. But many more, without political guidance and experience, will accept the conditions they encounter as an indication of the greatness of Britain and the inferiority of all other peoples.

The time is short: the Labour movement, and above all our Party, cannot afford to leave this great potential force for progress and for the march along the roads that lead to Communism to the mercy of the Tory and fascist demagogues. It should be our pride as well as our duty to instil in them the great lessons of democracy *now*, and not to store up for ourselves the task of " re-educating " them like the youth of Italy and Germany, perverted by long years of fascist rule.

It is the most adventurous young people who are susceptible to the cynical propaganda of monopoly capitalism. We have to fight against this conception—the gangster and the strangler, the murderers and the garotters who are held up by the film monopolists as the heroes of our time.

I recently attended a meeting of young people, and was rather surprised to see that throughout the meeting most of the lads present wore their hats, those small, snap-brimmed trilbies. Thinking this might be some ancient religious tradition, I inquired the reason. " Don't you know? " the lads replied. "We're the Brighton Rock boys."

We must win these young people away from the decadence of capitalist morality. It is in the realm of ideas that we can use the teachings of the *Communist Manifesto.* The *Manifesto* enables us to reveal the glaring contradictions between the so-called morality of the bourgeois corrupters of youth and the down-to-earth reality of working-class values. We have to put

into the hands of the youth all that is best in our culture—the great classics of Shakespeare and Dickens, rediscovered in the light of Marxism—and the works of our own movement. Is there a working-class lad who would not be thrilled by those two classics of struggle of our own time, *Revolt on the Clyde* and *Serving My Time*? If they want thrills and excitement, let us introduce them to the glowing pages of the history of working-class struggle.

Wherever you are, at the bench, in the mine, or at home, you can make the *Communist Manifesto* a living reality for the young people.

You can reveal to them the alternative to the dead-end alley of capitalism. You can show them that the fulfilment of their own aspirations lies in their participation in the greatest of all adventures—the fight for Socialism.

Emile Burns

I welcome particularly the contributions recalling the part played by the workers of Scotland and Wales in the working-class struggle, in the spreading of Marxism and in the building of the Communist Party.

Comrade Thomson referred to the need for the active participation of our professional and intellectual workers in Party Branch activities. I believe that it is always necessary to emphasise this, and I should only like to say that, on the other hand, Marx's theory is not the preserve of intellectuals and professional people. While it is their duty to take part in the general class struggle and the general life of the Communist Party, it is absolutely essential that the working-class members of our Party should also participate in the study and the wide dissemination of Marx's theory. This is necessary not only because the study of Marxism is vital as a guide to them in their everyday actions, but also because it is the understanding of the principles of Marxism which makes all the difference to numbers of militant workers. The understanding of Marxism leads to that essential change of outlook which wins them for the Communist Party, and makes them realise that the Communist Party is something different from any other section of the working-class movement. The understanding of Marxism is a barrier against the ideas of capitalism, and helps to root out capitalist ideas from the minds of the people, in this way preparing them for the task which is the mission of the working class.

I think that Comrade John Lewis is absolutely correct in saying that people are eager to learn about Marxist theory. Experiences reported to the Centre Propaganda Department

show that in many cases lectures dealing with aspects of Marxist theory have met with far wider response than most of the ordinary meetings of the Party. But I don't want to see developing in this Party a series of political meetings, and alongside these a series of Marxist lectures. What I want to see is the speakers and propagandists of the Party imbuing themselves with Marxism and bringing it into, and developing it in, their treatment of the actual political struggle going on today.

Comrade Ron Leven spoke of the young people and the need that they also should be given the message of Marxism. I must say that, over and over again when I have been asked to speak to young people, I have been told to make it simple, not to deal with abstract ideas and so on. Comrades, I absolutely refuse to be guided by such directives. I have experiences of taking Young Communist League classes on the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,* and I remember that it was Chapter 4, dealing with dialectical and historical materialism, which brought out the whole spirit of the young comrades, and made them really appreciate what Communism is. I want this spirit to be taken to the whole Party, and both in the Party and in the Y.C.L. let us get rid of the idea that comrades are backward and cannot appreciate the theory of Marxism. It is precisely that theory which lights up for them their whole political activity and their whole lives.

You will remember that Marx in dealing with wages said that under capitalism wages inevitably tended to a bare subsistence level. Last week the General Council of the Trades Union Congress referred to a "reasonable standard of wages," and the Labour correspondent of *The Times* on February 20 put the question—"What constitutes a reasonable standard of wages?" He then proceeded to show that Beveridge in 1938 had worked out a reasonable minimum subsistence level for a family of four, and this, the Labour correspondent said, adjusted for increased prices, would now mean £3 16s. 0d. a week. *The Times* correspondent went on: "However the trade unions may be inclined to interpret the idea of a reasonable standard . . . there is no reason to suppose the phrase, 'reasonable standard' will be loosely interpreted by those they meet at the negotiating table or in the Arbitration Court." Comrades, that is a tribute to the truth of the Marxist analysis of wages in capitalist society. I quote this not only to show that in the 100 years since 1848 there has been no difference in the capitalist basis of wages, but in order to bring home the point that there cannot be any fundamental change in the conditions of the working class until there is a fundamental change in the whole social order.

Comrades have spoken of the confidence of the workers in their power to change the world. I want to stress that it is the duty of the Communist Party to show that confidence to a higher extent than any other section of the working class, and that this confidence in the working class has also got to find expression in a supreme confidence in the Communist Party itself. Therefore the carrying out of this Resolution, the taking of the message of Marxism to the people of this country, must go hand in hand with the building of our Party, a Party imbued with the spirit and outlook of Marxism, a Party that can help the working class to carry out its historic mission.

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